

Montana's sheep industry dates back more than 120 years, and consistently ranks in the top 10 nationally in sheep and lamb production. Breeders have established a reputation for outstanding quality that brings seedstock buyers to Montana from throughout the United States and Canada.

Montana Sheep Directory aims to provide the industry and potential customers with an all-breeds directory to Montana's finest sheep, as well as a reference to individuals and companies that provide service to the industry. The Montana Department of Agriculture publishes the directory in cooperation with the Montana Wool Growers Association for distribution at trade shows, fairs and other promotional events.

Only sheep producers and service providers who responded and agreed to publication were included in this listing. As such, the publication should not be considered a complete listing of the industry in Montana.

The department's Agriculture Marketing and Business Development Bureau also offers other programs to assist Montanans in developing and expanding markets for the state's agricultural commodities and value-added products. The Growth Through Agriculture program in particular assists entrepreneurs in developing value-added enterprises.

Firms not listed in the booklet but who would like to be listed in future editions should contact the Agriculture Marketing and Business Development Bureau using information provided below.

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# Montana Wool Growers Association

The Montana Wool Growers Association (MWGA) was formed in January of 1883 at a meeting in Fort Benton. Montana territorial sheep producers saw a need for an organization to represent the wool and lamb business that was starting to flourish in the territory. The sheepmen in attendance elected Paris Gibson as its first president, the same man who would later lay out the plans for a city along the Missouri River, now called Great Falls. Gibson had come to the Montana territory to raise sheep on the rolling plains of the West.

On behalf of Montana sheep producers, the MWGA represents producer interests on the issues of federal land management, predatory animal control, imports of lamb and wool from foreign sheep producing countries, taxation and land use planning. The association hosts an annual ram sale in Miles City the second Thursday after Labor Day in September and their annual convention in Billings the first weekend in December each year.

MWGA is affiliated with the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), the national organization with offices in Centennial, Colorado and Washington, D.C. Montana is also associated with the work of the Sheep Institute at Montana State University. Among the projects leading increased sheep production is the use of sheep to graze noxious weeds such as leafy spurge and spotted knapweed. Sheep are proving to be a valuable tool in the war on weeds and environmentally friendly.

Membership is open to any Montana sheep producer with dues structured at four cents per pound of shorn wool.

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